

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 16, 2003

**ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPOINTS WILLIAM HADDAD CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE**

The Supreme Court of Illinois announced the appointment Thursday of William J. Haddad, a longtime attorney and well-known leader in the Arab American community in Illinois, to become Circuit Court judge in Cook County.

Mr. Haddad, founder and past president of the Arab-American Bar Association of Illinois who has written extensively on relations between Arab Americans and the United States since the attacks of September 11, 2001, will be sworn in by Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald on January 24 in the courtroom of the Illinois Supreme Court at 160 N. LaSalle Street.

Mr. Haddad is believed to be the first Arab American who will sit as a full Circuit Court judge in Cook County.

His appointment fills the vacancy left by the election to the Illinois Appellate Court of Denise O'Malley. The appointment runs through December 6, 2004. Mr. Haddad is expected to be a candidate for election to the position in 2004.

Mr. Haddad has been an attorney for nearly 30 years in Illinois, including serving as an assistant state's attorney in Cook County; and in his own private practice where he developed a substantial litigation background in civil and criminal matters.

He has been recommended or highly endorsed by every bar group which has evaluated his credentials for a judgeship.

"Mr. Haddad is considered to have excellent legal ability," said the Chicago Council of Lawyers in finding him well-qualified for judicial duties. "He is an effective and well-prepared advocate who is well versed in the law. His temperament is excellent and his integrity is unquestioned. He is praised widely for his community service."

Mr. Haddad, whose father was born in and emigrated from Lebanon, long has been active in community and legal affairs, not only those affecting Arab Americans. Members of his family helped entertainer Danny Thomas, also Lebanese, establish the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. They are still active with the project to aid children stricken with leukemia.

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## **Haddad Appointed Circuit Judge**

### **Add One**

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks, Mr. Haddad has written extensively and made several presentations, in which he cautions against the possible dangers of restraining personal freedoms of all Americans.

His papers and presentations have included a “White Paper on Hate Crimes,” presented to the ABA Council on Racial/Ethnic Justice in Philadelphia; “Governmental War Measures after 9/11,” presented to the Anti-Defamation League in Chicago and the Illinois Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; “The Impact of September 11,” published in the Constitutional Law Newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association; “The Impact of the September 11th Attacks on the Freedoms of Arabs and Muslims,” presented to the American Immigration Law Foundation and the Immigration Policy Center Forum at the Chicago Bar Association.

Mr. Haddad was recommended to the Court for appointment by Justice Fitzgerald after he was evaluated by a special 10-person judicial screening committee established by Justice Fitzgerald.

“The committee was highly impressed with Mr. Haddad’s background and his conscientiousness with the community as reflected by his involvement in Arab American activities and their relationship with other ethnic groups,” said Gino L. DiVito, chairperson of the special evaluation committee. “He has broad and extensive experience as a lawyer and brings a lifetime of dedication to the law and the American ethnic community.”

“I am honored and privileged by the confidence placed in me by the Illinois Supreme Court. I am also very humbled,” said Mr. Haddad. “To be a judge is the highest calling for an attorney.

“It makes us all very proud to be an American when something like this happens. The Court not only honors me with this appointment, but it also honors a very loyal and very dynamic Arab American community. It shows members of every minority community that you can succeed regardless of race, color, gender and ethnicity. I am grateful and dedicated to doing my best.”

Mr. Haddad recently was instrumental in winning a settlement with a major international hotel chain which denied public accommodations to the Midwest Federation of Syrian-Lebanon Clubs on the date of the Sept. 11 attacks. The proceeds of the settlement and his legal fees were donated to a scholarship fund for the group.

“He’s a gentleman and a man of very high character and professionalism,” said Talat Othman, head of the Arab-American Business and Professional Association of Illinois. “It is an appointment we certainly feel is based on merit.

“This also is very important to our community which has been under the pressure of feeling there is discrimination, unfair targeting and profiling. This is a step in showing that the system does place quality, public service and ability of Arab Americans on an equal basis with other Americans.”

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### **Add Two**

Similar sentiments were voiced by Rouhy Shalabi, president of the Arab-American Bar Association who served with Mr. Haddad on the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

“Bill Haddad is very qualified and very deserving to be on the bench based on his years of legal practice,” said Mr. Shalabi. “He worked in the Cook County state’s attorney’s office and was very successful in his private practice where he also grew a reputation for pro bono work and advocacy for clients who could not afford to pay for a lawyer’s services.

“Bill is also one of the leaders and stalwarts in our community,” continued Mr. Shalabi. “This will be very encouraging for members of our community to see someone like him, who is very deserving, on the bench, especially in this period after 9/11 when Arab Americans have not been portrayed very positively. He will be an example for lawyers in our community and in the community at large of what hard work and dedication can achieve. We are very proud of him.”

Mr. Haddad received his undergraduate degree from Marquette University and his law degree from DePaul University in 1973.

He worked as an assistant state’s attorney from 1974 to 1981 and then started his own private practice, currently known as Haddad, Schlack & Associates.

Additional community and professional activities Mr. Haddad has been involved in include: past president of the West Suburban Bar Association; president and founder of the Suburban Bar Coalition of Cook County; a member of the Supreme Court Capital Litigation Trial Bar Screening Committee; founding chairperson of the Illinois Law Consortium for Palestinian Legal Education; past chair of the Legal Affairs Committee of Mayor Daley’s Advisory Council on Arab Affairs; past chair of the Crime Prevention Awards Committee of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce. He also served on Gov. Rod Blagojevich’s transition team.

For his work in the profession and the community, the Illinois State Bar Association gave him its Board of Governors Professional Service Award in 2001. He also will be honored in March at the Annual Awards Luncheon of Cook County Crime Stoppers for his “dedication and sense of duty to ensure justice prevails.”

Mr. Haddad and his wife, Sandy, have two children, Christina and William Jr.